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ABSTRACT

A study of the literature on reading can introduce teachers to current methods for improving reading instruction. One current approach is the individualized reading program, in which children read trade books; such a program is built around individual conferences devoted to the accomplishment of individual objectives. A second approach, the Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development, provides individualized instruction by means of individualized skill assessment in six major reading areas. The Individually Prescribed Method of Instruction (IPI) is based on continuous progress, mastery of needed skills, achievement in subject matter, programmed instruction, systems analysis, and behavioral objectives. Traditional programs involve grouping children according to reading level and using basal readers, teachers' manuals, workbooks, and supplementary materials; such programs have been found to have definite strengths. Inservice programs should be designed to help improve reading instruction, but their number is decreasing because of budgetary problems. Finally, one type of reading improvement program in existence is that offered in colleges to help students improve their reading and study skills. (GW)

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READING IN A NUTSHELL: AN INSERVICE PRESENTATION ON READING PROGRAMS AND METHODOLOGIES

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The ability to read brings a reader into a realm of happiness; imaginative excitement, and an active participation into a real or nonreal world. A continuous, systematic and balanced reading program is necessary if children and youth are to be taught to read successfully as well as to read for enjoyment. The nature of the reading process requires a systematic and developmental teaching approach. In such a program emphasis would be placed more directly on reading as a meaningful act associated with clearer and more effective communication.

A continuous program in reading should begin in the primary grades and continue through the junior/senior high schools and college. Systematic instruction should occur at each level of a continuous program. In discussing reading programs, William S. Gray summarized the research and reflected his opinions when he stated:

> . . . (a) systematic basal instruction makes its greatest contribution in promoting essential understanding, attitudes and skills in reading; (b) stimulating supplementary reading and activity programs are highly productive in cultivating favorable attitudes toward reading, in deepening reading interests and in enriching the experience of children; (c) a sound reading program should make use of the advantages inherent in both systematic instruction in reading and challenging activities in all curriculum fields; (d) the optimum amount of systematic instruction varies with conditions such as the needs and capacities of children and the skill of the teacher.[1]

Though corrective work in reading may be necessary, the establishment of an effective program is the goal.

Overviews of Selected Research

A. "The Teaching of Reading Through the Use of Trade Books."

Dr. Lyman Hunt, the director of the reading center at the University of Vermont

emphasizes that children should spend blocks of time reading extensively from a variety of possible choices. The individualized reading program is based on the premise that a child's pattern of learning cannot be predetermined by either the rate or manner of learning by the child. The child's systematic learning process can best be guided within a highly flexible framework that allows each individual child considerable choice in reading material as well as being guided by a flexible teaching judgment.

A variety of arrangements and organizations are used within the classroom but the watchword is flexibility. There is a definite need to provide children with an opportunity to become exposed to a multitude of ideas; they need periods of uninterrupted sustained silent reading so they may pursue complex story lines and to see more continuous development of their characters. Providing this opportunity for each child to read extensively in the world of literature and other printed material is a program most frequently termed as an individualized reading program.

Certain aspects of this program may vary among teachers, depending on the teacher herself and her interpretation of the goals of the program, based on the skills needed developed for each child in her classroom. Basic principles of individualized reading are common to nearly all classroom situations. Some of these typical elements which may pertain to your classroom goals may be:

1. Rather than using a textbook series for instructional purposes, literature books may predominate as an instructional base.
2. The children may be encouraged to make personal choices with regard to their reading material.
3. Each child will read at his own rate and set his own pace for his reading goals.
4. Individual conference between the teacher and each child so progress and accomplishments may be noted.

5. Each child will carry his reading into some form of summarizing activity.
6. Individual records may be kept by the teacher or child or both.
7. Grouping should be for a purpose and when this purpose is accomplished each child should leave the group.
8. Word recognition and related skills are taught in relation to each child's need

A program that employs the use of literature books as a core for individualized reading as well as activities for overlearning and transferring of skills is markedly different from a textbook program where children are assigned to groups according to their reading levels. In the textbook program, once children are grouped, directed reading instruction is presented to all children simultaneously according to procedures outlined in the teacher's manual. Each child in a group is bound to a pace determined by the group, the material and the directions given by the teacher. In individualized reading the opposite conditions become more prevalant; each child will spend blocks of time reading extensively a variety of choices.

The overwhelming and ever growing knowledge available for children in literature, creates a vital goal of giving each child the opportunity, under teacher guidance, to bring this world of vast knowledge into direct being with each child. Each child should have the classroom time to explore and select books that will probe his inner awareness as well as his enjoyment for reading.

As was mentioned earlier, as a classroom goal, was the importance of the individual conference in the individualized reading program. As this type of program is a one-to-one interaction of teacher and child so must be the conference. Dr's. Jeanette Veach and Lyman Hunt both agree that the "meat" of the individualized program is the conference. Prior to implementing the conference, the teacher should develop objectives to the purpose and outcome of the conference. Some common objectives of the individual conference found in many classrooms are:

Each child should develop a basic understanding of .....

..... comprehension skills.

..... personal adjustments in relation to his reading selections.

..... developing mechanical skills.

Under each of these headings a teacher may have sub-headings that may meet the needs of the individual child in her classroom. Such objectives may be:

A. Development of Comprehension Skills

1. central thought
2. inference-critical reading
3. value judgments
4. determine author sequence
5. follow plot sequence

B. Personal Adjustments in Relation to Reading Selections

1. insight into personal interest story
2. awareness of peer group reaction
3. insight into possible personality behavior changes

C. Developing Mechanical Skills

1. word definitions
2. study skills
3. ability to analyze skills

Ms. Elaine Wonsavage reveals in her research that here are three general areas of concern that have been raised by classroom teachers as well as administrators in regard to implementing such a program. These areas of concern are:

1. Teacher readiness and understanding of the program.
2. The cost and amount of materials needed.
3. The placement and method of teaching the needed skills.

B. "The Teaching of Reading Through the Use of Systems"

Dr. Wayne Otto, and his staff at the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning, originated the Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development. This program provides reading instruction at the elementary level through a skill centered approach. It is the direct result of the needs expressed by classroom teachers and reading specialists.

The intent of this program is to provide individualized instruction through the use of individualized skill assessment. A mastery checklist of reading skills is provided for the teacher who in turn may determine the specific skill needs of her pupils. The Design structure includes an outline of reading skills in six major areas and corresponding behavioral objectives. These six skill areas are:

I. Word Attack

II. Comprehension

III. Study Skills

IV. Self-Directed Reading

V. Interpretive Reading

VI. Creative Reading

Each of these skill areas are divided into four to seven levels of mastery. The most thoroughly developed area is word attack. Children have 45 word attack skills they must master. Upon mastering these skills, they will be able to attack phonically and/or structurally regular words on an independent basis and recognize on sight all words on the Dolch list. The comprehension skills are constructed as to assist children in gaining meaningful information from printed material at a sixth grade readability level. The third area is that of study skills. There are 132 skill related areas to be developed. When mastered, children should be able to locate and derive information from standard reference sources as well as maps, graphs and tables. The skill areas of self-directed reading, interpretive and creative reading are accompanied

by a general framework or an "open" set of objectives that are subject to teacher interpretation.

The scope and sequence of this program for skill development is very thorough and inclusive, while it is at the same time flexible in structure. While many teachers find certain aspects of the Design program to be beneficial, for students as well as themselves, others find those same points to be less desirable. When considering the use of the Design, it may be noted that the framework of this program includes sufficient skill areas related only to the reading section of your language arts curriculum. Language, spelling and handwriting programs should be implemented along with the Design.

The effectiveness of such a program brings Elaine Wonsavage's research back into the framework of the Design. As the Design is a skills program, Ms. Wonsavage's research indicates that in teaching individualized reading through a systematic skill approach, a teacher may omit skills or may not be able to maintain a balance of skills that need to be developed in a particular grade. Concern is also stated that the average classroom teacher may not have sufficient time to develop a one-to-one conference that could encompass the skills that are being taught.

B1. "The Individually Prescribed Method of Instruction (IPI)"

The IPI programs, that are in use, have a detailed and very comprehensive and systematic structure. This may readily be seen in the materials and manuals that are used. Dr. Lyman Hunt, Jr. of the University of Vermont has established an interesting analogy of IPI that may make this program more meaningful to the classroom teacher:

> "Prescribed instruction can be likened to a section of a railroad track with the initial and terminal points well marked. One can recall walking the endless series of ties, the small steps evenly spaced. One is immediately aware of any false

steps, catching the foot between the ties yet easily scrambling back up the next intervalled step."[2]

Dr. Hunt's analogy is very simple but yet one can clearly see that in IPI the student understands the goals of the program and what skills he will need to master in order to accomplish his goals.

As it is important for each individual reading program, the IPI has distinguishing features which corroborates the program as being an individually prescribed method of instruction. These features are:

1. continuous progress
2. mastering of needed skills
3. achievement in subject matter
4. programmed instruction
5. systems analysis
6. behavioral objectives

Teachers are cautioned of confusing IPI with IRP. (Individualized Reading Program) Though in a school setting IPI and IRP are usually well combined. IPI deals with the aspect of cognitive learning while IRP deals with the aspect of learning affectively. As there are six distinguishing features of IPI, there are also distinguishing features of IRP. Though they may seem to contrast one another, they work very well when combined in a classroom learning experience. These features are:

1. learning by discovery
2. learning to learn
3. personal growth
4. self-direction
5. individual productivity
6. self-selection

After comparing the features of IPI and IRP, one may say that IRP is unstructured when compared to IPI. The structure for a systematic approach for IRP cannot be

outlined in a manual but will be found in the mind of the teacher. The secret of this program is to transfer this structure from the teacher's mind to the mind of the child. The major concern is that the teacher must have a clear and constant approach or she will become lost in the maze of teaching.

Dr. Hunt has created a formula which may assist the teacher who is creating her own IRP structure. The formula o+s=p is the key to success. The o in the formula pertains to openness, the idea of person involvement based on interest. The s stands for stability. Unless stability is maintained, productivity (p) is reduced. Though the formula is the key, stability is the answer for IRP.

Two major concepts of individualization has been presented in this section of Reading Systems. A distinction has been made between the two forms. The difference is not of structure of IPI vs. IRP but rather one of the nature of the structures..

C. "The Use of Traditional Programs In The Teaching of Reading"

For years the use of single textbooks series constituted a "basal" reading program in many elementary schools. From 1930-1950, some of these elementary schools began to use two or more series of "basal" books, these additional series were referred to as a "co-basal" series. Thus, today many schools have adopted a "basal" or a "co-basal" as well as having employed comparable books to use as supplementary material. Although these basal materials are usually designed for grades 1 through 6, some textbook companies have designed and expanded their series so they will encompass high school pupils.

The use of the traditional or basal program is markedly different from the individualized reading program. They are different wherein the basal program grouping is based on the reading level of children while grouping on an individualized program is based on the need for skill development. Once children in a basal program have been grouped, they are subjected to a predetermined pace set by the rest of their group as well as directions given by their teacher. Also, once in this group they are subject

to simultaneous instruction according to the highly defined procedures in the teacher's manual.

The basal reader is designed with careful control and gradual introduction of vocabulary, concepts and mechanical features which research has demonstrated create learning problems for the pupil as he develops his reading skills. In addition, the basal reader textbook is a reading anthology of short stories or a collection of excerpts from well known original stories and books.

The teacher's manual is an essential tool of a structured basal program. If full and correct use of a basal program is to be used, knowledge of the proper use of the manual is required. It is only by consulting the manual that the teacher may learn the sequence of skills and abilities the program is designed to develop. The teacher's manual suggests; it does not dictate. There is no way a manual may replace an intelligent and concerned teacher of reading. The teacher must be "flexible" as well as adapt suggestions made by the manual. The manual serves as a guideline but the results achieved are only as good as the teacher that uses the manual.

Another integral facet of the structured program is the proper use of the accompanying workbooks. This facet of the program must be used with discretion. The workbook usually provides a follow-up on the skills taught through the basal reader lesson, while some serve as preparatory activities prior to reading selections from the reader. In either of these cases, the construction of the workbook provides additional practice on vocabulary, word recognition skills and comprehension abilities, which are essential to the sequence and scope of the basal program. No author can ever hope to prepare a program which will be a "perfect fit" for every child. Here again the teacher's professional judgment of supplement, to adapt and to reject is required.

By skillful grouping, by the well chosen selection of activities, suggested by the manual, and by the use of supplementary materials, the skillful teacher can

differentiate her methods of instruction as to fit the varied capabilities and interests of her children. This statement implies that the basal reading program has definite strengths, which it does. Dr. Harry Sartain has compiled a list of the strengths of the basal program. They are:

1. a carefully and repeated vocabulary.
2. a logically arranged and complete sequence of reading skills
3. an introduction to a variety of well selected literature
4. a grouping of related stories and poems into units which develop a concept or value more than a single selection or example can do.
5. a listing of related books and stories which can be read independently by the children.
6. a variety of suggestions for independent learning activities related to the readings.
7. opportunities to relate reading instruction to the other language arts through group interaction.
8. practice materials which are closely related to skills developed through the basic book.
9. opportunities to prepare the child for reading the basic selection--developing concepts and setting purposes--so that he can read with understanding and a feeling of success.

The advantages may be used to judge a basal program's strengths but also the result of the teacher's remarks to children and skill of using the basal program are sub-strengths but very essential in determining the worth of such a program.

Prior to implementing a basal program, one must understand the principles for effective use of a structured program. For further findings and research on the basal reader program, you may wish to refer to:

a. Edwards, Phyllis. "Individualizing Your Basic Reading Program." Grade Teacher, 80 (2-63), 16, 132, 133.

b. Johnson, Rodney H. "Individualized and Basal Primary Reading Programs." Elementary English, 42 (12-1965), 902-904.

c. Sartain, Harry W. The Place of Individualized Reading In A Well Planned Program, Ginn Contributions in Reading No. 28. Boston: Ginn '65.

D. "The Inservice Program"

Teacher inservice is usually thought of as a means by which an individual or group will "lecture" for a period of time and tell you what it is you are doing wrong. Inservice programs in local schools have decreased over recent years. The main reason for this is the lack of funds within the local level as well as the Federal level.

School districts are being forced to go to 1 or 2 day inservice formats for an entire year. Though the inservice is usually designed around teacher needs or requests, we must admit 1 or 2 days is a drop in the bucket. Granted, this may spur interest and excitement, a long range program should be the goal.

Otto and Erickson in their IRA monograph, Inservice Education to Improve Reading Instruction, emphasize the "process" of inservice. This "process" of 5 steps is the integral portion of an inservice program. Otto and Erickson suggest: Identifying The Needs ⟶ Setting A Goal ⟶ Stating The Objectives ⟶ Selecting Activities ⟶ Evaluating Results.

Obviously, if one were to follow these steps for inservice, the next concern would be that of implementation of the inservice. Budgetary problems begin to take their toll during this operation. As one may infer, I am not discussing 1 or 2 day inservice formats. The goal here is a long term format that is sequenced from one meeting date to another. One such example is the "Elmwood Reading Instruction and Inservice Program." This small rural school has had 105 hours of inservice in the past 2 years. To reaffirm the position on budgetary problems, I must state that this program could not have been realized without Federal funding through ESEA Title III.

The Elmwood inservice format was designed and conducted by Dr. Joseph S. Nemeth of Bowling Green University. Following Otto and Erickson's "process" for inservice, Dr. Nemeth has developed a three year plan or a 145 hour format for inservice. This inservice format is structured about the reading skills of: vocabulary, comprehension, and study skills within content subject disciplines.

We must not lose sight of the goal of this type of program - namely to improve reading instruction. Inservice formats are good if they are structural and sequenced. The basic problem being budgetary. It is difficult, if not impossible, to budget for inservice when major cutbacks are being made in all areas of the curriculum.

E. College Reading Improvement Programs

A rude awakening may sometimes face many college students upon their arrival to college campuses. A sample weeks reading for a college freshman may amount to 856,300 words. If read at the rate of 250 words per minute, a student could spend 57 hours of reading each week.[3] Undoubtedly, this becomes a very presure-packed situation. Reading this vast corpus of words may not be the most difficult task but comprehending and experiencing the new vocabulary concepts could weaken even the strongest student. Many college students face this type of problem and require some form of educational assistance.

In most, and certainly there are exceptions, colleges and universities students may be referred to academic tutors for assistance within a specified discipline. This approach is adequate for the discipline but does not fulfill the students who require assistance in reading skills or study methods.

One type of Reading Improvement program in existence may be located in the education department of a University. This type of program, usually offered on a non-credit basis, is designed to encompass reading and study methods within a one to three hour weekly class session. The students are introduced to speed reading techniques and programmed reading materials. The Diagnostics are based upon a pre-post setting

with standardized survey instruments. Too often times, a class setting of this nature may require an additional fee. The fee is used to offset any expenses occurred during the quarter/semester of operation. It is possible the fee may limit the quantity as well as quality of students enrolling into such a program.

A program in operation at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University attempts to offset this problem by having the program offered free to all students. This program operates from the Counseling Center, which may offer counseling to all students, not only in reading and study skills, but in all areas of career, personal, and social concerns.

The Virginia Tech program also may go one step farther than some programs in that not only are classes offered and a self-help Reading and Study Skills Lab available for student use each quarter, but many outreach programs are offered to dormitories or groups within the college structure. The Counseling Center staff, with the assistance of resident advisors and peer helpers, attempts to reach many of the Tech students with reading and study concerns during each quarter of the school year.

Universities must become more involved with the reading/study skills need of their students. As a university or college is classified as a higher form of education, all concerned should consider a Reading/Study Skills Program a priority.

The purpose of this study has been to introduce to you, as well as refresh your memory, on some current methods for improving reading instruction. By no means is it intended to sell or proclaim one method better than another. You the teacher and/or administrator will have to decide which program is better for your students based upon their needs as well as your knowledge of a particular method.

FOOTNOTES

[1]William S. Gray, "Reading", Encyclopedia of Education Research. (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1960), p. 122.

[2]Hunt, Lyman, Jr. Updating the Individual Approach to Reading: IPI or IRP? Meeting Individual Needs in Reading. Pgs. 43 IRA. 1971

[3]Seven Reading Strategies. Baldridge Reading Instruction Materials, 1970. p. vii

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4. Hunt, Lyman, Jr. "A Grouping Plan Capitalizing On The Individualized Program," 12th Annual Convention IRA. ERIC No. ED 012 227.
5. Knight and Peterson. "Evaluation of Reading Skills In The Prototypic System of Reading Instruction," ERIC No. ED 030 555.
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8. Sartain, Harry W. The Place of Individualized Reading in a Well-Planned Program. Ginn and Company. 1961. (free if ordered from Ginn and Company)
9. Wonsavage, Elaine P. "Research Reveals Questions Educators Raise About Individualized Reading," Reading As An Intellectual Activity. Pgs. 235-241. Scholastic Magazine. Vol. 8. 1963.

NOTE: For a further bibliography pertaining to the reading process, refer to:

Sartain, Harry W. Individualized Reading-An Annotated Bibliography. IRA. 1970.